

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, Rep. Pete Stark introduced the Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act. This legislation creates a commemorative Congressional medal of honor for organ donors and their families. Senator Bill Frist has introduced companion legislation in the Senate.

“Advances in science and medical technology are making organ transplantation safer and more effective” Stark said. “Yet, every thirteen minutes another American is added to the long waiting list of those needing a transplant. The rate of organ donation just isn’t keeping up with this growing need. The sad result is that many Americans are being denied their chance to live despite available medical help.”

“The serious shortage of organs for donation is a growing national problem that needs to be addressed,” Stark continued. “In 2001 alone, over 6,000 people died waiting for a suitable transplant. Over 80,000 people are currently waiting for an organ transplant, including over 2,000 children under age 18.”

“The Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act is an effort to encourage more Americans to become organ donors by recognizing this brave and selfless act to save the lives of others. I’m pleased to join with Senator Frist to introduce this important legislation,” said Stark.

The Gift of Life Congressional Medal Act establishes a nonprofit fund to be used to design, produce, and distribute a Congressional Medal of Honor to organ donors or to a surviving family member. Enactment of this legislation would have no cost to the Federal Government. The program would be self-sufficient through charitable donations. The bill has the support of the United Network for Organ Sharing, the American Society of Transplant Surgeons, the American Society of Pediatric Nephrology, the American Society of Transplantation and the Association of Organ Procurement Organizations.

“This is non-controversial, non-partisan legislation to increase the rate of organ donation. I ask my colleagues to help bring an end to transplant waiting lists and recognize the enormous faith and courage displayed by organ donors and their families,” said Stark.